

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT COOPERATION WITH WORK PROGRAM- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Food Assistance Only**

### **To Avoid a Non-Cooperation Penalty You Must:**

- Keep appointments with your caseworker.
- Attend scheduled orientation sessions or testing.
- Complete work program assignments.
- Keep your job when employed.

### **What to do if you have a Good Reason for Not Cooperating:**

- If you receive an appointment letter and cannot come at the scheduled time, immediately call the caseworker who scheduled the appointment.
- If you are ill, injured, or disabled and unable to come to a meeting or do your work or training assignment, tell your caseworker. You may be required to provide a doctor's note or be referred for an assessment of your condition.
- If you have no one to care for your children or have no money for transportation, tell your caseworker. Your caseworker can help.
- If you are afraid to look for work or complete your work program activities because you fear the absent parent may hurt you or your child, tell your caseworker.

### **What Happens if You don't Cooperate?**

**Your TANF benefit will be closed for a period of time when you do not cooperate with work programs.** There will be no money for you or any of your family. If you receive child care assistance, your child care assistance will also stop.

- The first time you do not cooperate, your cash case will close for a minimum of three months.
- The second time you do not cooperate, your cash will be closed for a minimum of six months.
- The third time you do not cooperate, your cash will be closed for a minimum of one year.
- Any penalties after that will make you and your family ineligible for cash benefits for ten years.
- **If you are receiving food assistance, YOU will not get food assistance during the minimum penalty period.** The rest of your family will continue to receive food assistance if otherwise eligible.

***To cure your penalty, you must be cooperating in work programs and you cannot get benefits again until the end of the minimum penalty period.***

You will receive a notice at least 10 days before the penalty begins. The notice will tell you about your appeal rights.

### **How to Cooperate Once Notified of a Penalty:**

Contact your caseworker. Your caseworker will explain what activities you must participate in and for how long you must participate to establish cooperation.

### **How to Appeal the Decision to Apply a Penalty:**

- Ask your caseworker to have your good cause reviewed if you think you have a good reason for not cooperating but were unable to contact DCF in time to prevent a penalty.
- You may contact the local DCF Service Center or call the toll-free number 1-877-369-4777 to request a fair hearing with a hearing officer. Your benefits may continue during the appeal process if you request a hearing within the time specified in your penalty notice.

**PLEASE NOTE: CASH BENEFITS ARE NOW LIMITED TO 48 MONTHS FOR A LIFE-TIME.**

**Child Support Service (CSS) can help you:** When your cash assistance ends (TANF or Grandparents as Caregivers), you may receive child support income through CSS. If you only have Child Care Assistance, child support income must be sent to you.

**To Avoid a Non-Cooperation Penalty You Must:**

- Complete all CSS forms and keep all appointments. Give us documents when needed.
- Give information, as best you can, to find the child(ren)'s absent parent(s).
- Help us establish and enforce orders for child support.
- Appear in court when needed.
- Help when paternity (who the father is) must be established. Turn over to DCF all child support, support allotments, and alimony paid to you or any family member while receiving TANF or Grandparents as Caregivers.

**What To Do If You Have a Good Reason For Not Cooperating:**

- If you receive an appointment letter and cannot come at the scheduled time, immediately call the CSS caseworker who scheduled the appointment at the phone number on the letter.
- If you are afraid to seek child support because you or the child(ren) might be hurt in some way, tell your EES caseworker your reasons for being afraid. Your caseworker may be able to excuse you.
- If a child is in the process of being adopted, talk to your EES caseworker

**What Happens If You Don't Cooperate?**

**Your TANF and Child Care benefit will end for your entire family when you do not cooperate with CSS.**

- The first time you do not cooperate, your cash and Child Care case will close for a minimum of three months.
- The second time you do not cooperate, your cash and Child Care case will be closed for a minimum of six months.
- The third time you do not cooperate, your cash and Child Care case will be closed for a minimum of one year.
- Any penalties after that will make you and your family ineligible for cash or childcare benefits for ten years.

***To cure your penalty, you must cooperate with Child Support Enforcement and you cannot get benefits again until the end of the minimum penalty period.***

***You will receive a notice at least 10 days before the penalty begins. The notice will tell you about your appeal rights. Tell your CSS caseworker within 10 days of getting the notice if you had a good reason for not cooperating, and your assistance may be reinstated.***

**How to Cooperate Once You Are Notified of a Penalty:**

Contact your worker. Your worker will explain what you need to do to cooperate.

**How to Appeal the Decision to Apply a Penalty:**

- Ask your worker's supervisor to review the case if you think you have a good reason for not cooperating but your worker did not accept your reason.
- You may contact the local DCF Service Center or call the toll-free number, **1-877-369-4777** to request a fair hearing with a hearing officer. Your benefits may continue during the appeal process if you request a hearing within the time specified in your penalty notice.

**PLEASE NOTE: CASH BENEFITS ARE NOW LIMITED TO 48 MONTHS FOR A LIFE-TIME.**